NUMB. I.

The LAY-MONK.

Sine nunc meo me vivere interia modo. Ter.

MONDAY, *November* 16. 1713.

ABOUT three Years ago, ſeveral Gentlemen of liberal Education and great Examples, as well as diligent Promoters of Learning, Perſons of Leiſure, eaſy in their Fortunes, and free from the Impediments of a Family, became acquainted; and growing intimate in Friendſhip, as Men of the ſame Taſte, Intereſt and Inclinations quickly do, often held occaſional Meetings for their mutual Satisfaction and Improvement, by a free Communication of their Sentiments on Subjects of Philoſophy and polite Literature. At length, at one of their Meetings, Sir *Euſtace Locker*, a Gentleman much eſteem'd by the reſt, acquainted them, that he had ſomething ſingular to propoſe to them; and the Company being very curious to know what it was, he deliver'd himſelf at large, as follows,

'GENTLEMEN, You, who are acquainted with 'Books, may remember, as well as I, what we 'are told of *Pythagoras*; that when he had tra-'vell'd thro' *Egypt* and *Aſſyria*, and by acquainting 'himſelf with the Doctrines and Cuſtoms of their 'learned Sages, had enrich'd his Mind with 'Variety of Science, and the moſt excellent Pre-'cepts and Rules of Life, he founded a College 'in *Calabria*, for cultivating the Minds, and regu-'lating the Manners of Youth, which was after-'wards call'd the *Italick* School.

'Among other wiſe Inſtitutions, believing that 'Solitude much favour'd the Deſign of philoſo-'phical and contemplative Men, he initiated no 'Members into his Society, but ſuch as ab-'ſtracted themſelves from publick Affairs, aban-'don'd the Purſuits of Profit and Pleaſure, and 'reſolv'd no longer to mingle with the World. 'And this was the firſt Inſtance recorded in Hi-'ſtory of a Monaſtick Life.

'The *Eſſenes*, a Sect among the *Jews*, follow-'ing this Example, for the more effectual Acqui-'ſition of Knowledge and Vertue, deſerted 'Towns and populous Cities; and relinquiſhing 'all Commerce with the buſy Part of Mankind, 'had their ſeparate Abodes in remote and un-'frequented Places.

'In imitation of this retir'd Life, about the 'third Century, ſeveral Chriſtians that expreſs'd 'the higheſt Veneration of Religion, and aim'd 'at an exalted Degree of Sanctity and Devotion, 'to diſtinguiſh themſelves from others, who 'in their Judgment, by looſe and diſorderly 'Manners, debas'd the Dignity, and ſullied the 'divine Character of a Chriſtian, withdrawing 'from Towns and Places of Concourſe, renounc'd 'the Converſation of their Species, whence they 'deriv'd the Appellation of *Anchorites*.

'Theſe Religious Itinerants, deſtitute of Habi-'tations, and without any Rules and Inſtituti-'ons to form their Manners and regulate their 'Lives, rov'd about the World vagous and un-'confin'd, or repair'd to wild and unpractis'd 'Mountains, vaſt Woods or ſolitary Plains, where 'they underwent innumerable Hardſhips and 'painful Auſterities, and freely choſe the Curſe 'of *Nebuchadnezzar*: Theſe Perſons muſt have been 'in very whimſical Circumſtances, if not wholly 'govern'd by the ſecret Influence of the Moon, 'who preferring Rags to clean and decent Gar-'ments, and loneſome Caves to convenient Hou-'ſes, were contented to live like wild Beaſts, 'whilſt they pretended to be exalted above the 'Race of Men: At length ſome of theſe erratick 'Saints, were firſt collected into a Body by St. '*Benedict*, enclos'd in conſecrated Walls, and 'reſcu'd from the Wilderneſs, to be civiliz'd and 'cultivated by regular Diſcipline and prudent 'Inſtitutions.

'After this Model numerous Monaſteries 'were ſoon erected; and the *Monks* of various 'Orders (a fertile Race of Men) encreas'd and 'propagated their Species ſo faſt, that they 'ſoon peopled all *Chriſtendom*. 'Tis true, many 'Things may juſtly be objected to the Orders and 'Statutes of theſe Religious Societies; yet when 'I have reflected on the great Advantages and Op-'portunities afforded by a retir'd Life, to inſpire the 'Soul with generous Sentiments and Divine Paſſi-'ons, to augment and refine our Ideas, and elevate 'the Mind to the greateſt Heights of Science and 'Vertue, I have often wiſh'd to be a Member of a

Lay-

(Price Three Half Pence.)

'*Lay-Monaſtery*, that ſhould not be liable to any 'juſt Objection, where the Fraternity might be 'Gentlemen diſingag'd from Buſineſs, zealous in 'the Intereſts of Learning and Morality, and, in 'ſhort, adorn'd with the Qualifications, which '(my ſelf excepted) all the Individuals of this 'Company eminently poſſeſs. For this Reaſon 'my Propoſal is, That we ſhould form our ſelves 'into ſuch a Monaſtick Society; that being ſepa-'rated from the Crowd, and deliver'd from the 'Noiſe and Strife of the Buſy, we may with 'greater Succeſs purſue our Improvements, and 'enjoy the Satisfaction of Friendſhip in Retire-'ment.

'I do not, continu'd Sir *Euſtace*, expect a pre-'ſent Anſwer, but recommend the Propoſal to be 'conſider'd, and will wait till our next Meeting 'for your deliberate Opinion; at which Time 'if you approve the Scheme, you will ſuggeſt ſuch 'Statutes and Rules as you think proper for our '*Lay-Convent*.

At another Meeting, not long after, Sir *Euſtace* reſuming his Diſcourſe, continu'd: 'I preſume, 'Gentlemen, you have well weigh'd the Project 'I propos'd to you, when we were laſt aſſembled: 'And, methinks, if ever there was a Seaſon that 'invited to a ſolitary Life, it is this: For, be-'ſides the Charms that, in my Opinion, are al-'ways to be found in Quiet and Retirement, you 'ſee how the Freedom of Converſation is at pre-'ſent ſuſpended, and every where perplex'd with 'Party-Diſputes; ſo that a Man can hardly go into 'a promiſcuous Company, but he will either ſee 'them look upon one another with Coldneſs and 'Suſpicion, or whiſpering to know who that Gen-'tleman is, before they will open their Minds; 'or elſe they are all inflam'd, and in a Ferment, 'and the whole Company appears as if you ſhou'd 'go into the Theatre at the laſt Act of a Tra-'gedy; and without knowing what paſs'd be-'fore, ſhou'd think, as any Man wou'd, that 'the Actors all talk'd like Men out of their Sen-'ſes. This is ſo much our Caſe, that I hope it 'is your Opinion as well as mine, that our Inte-'reſt engages us to retreat from ſuch diſagreeable 'Company, and form a private Society, where 'we may keep an undiſturb'd Poſſeſſion of our 'ſelves, enjoy the Satisfaction of vertuous Friend-'ſhip, and the inexpreſſible Advantages of unin-'terrupted Freedom. I have a Houſe not far from 'the Town, which ſeems every way convenient 'for this Purpoſe, and which (if your Sentiments 'agree with mine) is at your Service.

After a little Diſcourſe, the whole Company expreſs'd their Approbation of this Propoſal, and thank'd the Knight for his generous Offer. Then the Laws and Orders for the new Convent came under Deliberation; and the principal Inſtitutions agreed upon were theſe that follow.

I. That the whole Fraternity ſhall be aſſembled twice a Week; and that every Member prepare in his Turn an Eſſay in Writing on what Subject him-ſelf ſhall chuſe, for promoting of Learning, Vertue, Politeneſs or the Knowledge of Human Nature, to be communicated to the reſt, of which one ſhall be read at every Meeting; and when the Members have deſcanted upon it, and made their Objections, it ſhall be corrected where the Majority think fit; and when written out fair, be committed to the Cuſtody of the Secretary, and repoſited in the Archives of the Convent.

II. That none ſhall enter into any Diſcourſes or Debates about Affairs of State, nor communicate to the Aſſembly any Eſſay upon Politicks and Govern-ment; the Gentlemen being of different Opinions in theſe Points, this Order was made to prevent Diſputes and Party-Animoſities, that at leaſt one *Britiſh* Society might live in Tranquility, and not be diſtracted and divided againſt it ſelf.

III. That all the Members ſhall live a ſingle Life, tho' a Vow of Cœlibacy is impos'd on none; but if any one is pleas'd to marry, his Relation to the Fraternity ceaſes, and another is to be cho-ſen in his Room.

IV. That no Member ſhall lie under any Con-ſtraint to continue in the Fraternity, but ſhall have his Diſmiſſion whenever he deſires it; this Society being declar'd free and voluntary.

V. That a new Member ſhall be elected upon the Deceaſe or Diſmiſſion of any of the old within Ten Days.

Theſe Rules being eſtabliſh'd, they proceeded to the Choice of a Secretary; which Honour fell upon me, the leaſt worthy of the Number.

In a ſhort Time we repair'd to our *Lay-Convent*, where Apartments and all Conveniencies were pro-vided for our Reception. Here we purſu'd with great Alacrity and Pleaſure the End of our So-ciety, till about Ten Days ſince Sir *Euſtace* at one of our Conventions mov'd, That for the Enter-tainment of others, ſome of our Eſſays ſhould go abroad. I made ſome Objections to it; but the Motion was well receiv'd by the major Part; and after a ſhort Debate, the Fraternity came to the following Reſolution.

Reſolv'd,

That Mr. Jacob Ravenſcroft, *one of the Members and Secretary of this Society be empower'd, and he is hereby empower'd, to print and publiſh, or cauſe to be printed and publiſh'd, every Week three of our Eſſays ei-ther in Proſe or Verſe, and any Conferences that ſhall paſs in the Society, or any Papers that ſhall be ſent to it, as he ſhall judge fit.*

And this Reſolution was Enter'd and Regiſter'd accordingly.

This Paper will come out every Monday, Wedneſday *and* Friday, *and may be had at Mr.* Harriſon's *by the* Royal Exchange; *Mrs.* Dodd's *and Mrs.* Boulter's *without* Temple-Bar; *and Mrs.* Bond's *at* Charing-Croſs.

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